

A Study of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*: Intention to Live

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I Foreword

The more complex society becomes, the more complexity is required of us who live there. If we want to continue to live in a society which is getting more complex, it seems that we must have the same complexity as that society.

When we try to follow our own ideas, we are often regarded as obstinate men within a complicated society. When we need not to keep privately in our mind the part which we cannot concede to others, but to show it, we often experience that society does not accept that we follow it. Society, for example, says things like "He is a man who thinks only about his own things," or "He is an obstinate man."

I think the reason we feel a need to be honest and not to tell lies at least to ourselves is that alone with the growing complexity of society comes an increasing tendency for that society to deny our intention to be faithful to ourselves. If, as a rule, we want to live tranquil lives, it may be necessary for us to suppress our own ideas and be yes-men. As a result, we suffer from two conflicting conditions. This is the problem for Holden Caulfield, the protagonist in *The Catcher in the Rye*¹⁾: he too suffers from these two conflicting conditions.

In this report I would like to examine how Holden lives with these two conditions. I hope this reading will be somewhat helpful to me and to the reader.

II The Cold Society

The society where Holden lives is a so-called cold society. In order to emphasize the coldness of that society, the story takes place in winter time, and occasionally there is snow. There is a scene after Holden meets Maurice. When he walks in the rain, he gets drenched to the skin, and looks like he will be frozen to death. When we read this kind of scene we can see how cold the society is. The men who live in and maintain the cold society necessarily have cold hearts and rarely think much of others. In particular, they treat with indifference the man who acts apart from the general social standard; they pretend to be unconcerned about him. Holden's view is that most people don't have any doubts about this accepted social standard—they just follow it. When he says, "All those Ivy League bastards look alike," (p. 90) "Game, my ass," (p. 13) and "You just didn't know this teacher, Mr. Vinson. He could drive you crazy sometimes, him and the goddam class. I mean, he'd keep telling you to unify and simplify all the time. Some things you just can't do that to," (p. 192) we can see what he wants to say. Society is almost fanatically bigoted in its acceptance of only one standard, and its refusal of anything else even if it is only slightly different from that standard. One of his most important points relates not the problem of the individual person but that of the standard of society. We can see his interest from the fact that he pays attention to so-called what is not really concerned to the men's mind. For example, he does not agree that people feel in-

terested in cars, movies, and money. People are absorbed with cars and "worry if they get a little scratch on them, and they're always talking about how many miles they get to a gallon, and if they get a brand new car already they start thinking about trading it for one that's even newer." (p. 136) And they are also enthusiastic about movies and movie stars and "keep looking all around the goddam room, like as if they expected a flock of goddamn movie stars to come in any minute." (p. 78) It seems that they think much more of material goods than of the heart.

The role of the man living in this kind of society and worrying about the social tendency is one that many protagonists in American novels have taken. There is almost a dissatisfaction and irritation with the culture which is apt to detatch itself from the human heart and to go too far foreward. And this is not a problem only for the protagonists of American literature, but also for ourselves. We sometimes get angry at one over-developed civilization. The United Statetes, in particular, experienced great wealth around 1950 having taken advantage of the two World Wars. I think Japan had the same experience around 1970. In such times of great wealth, the movement of the human heart or of human nature is apt to be sublimated. That is to say, in this kind of age, the tendency towards money or material goods is stronger than that towards the human heart, and the men who insist that human beings must recover their original nature, or those who even take the time to think what human nature means, are typically treated with contempt. The protagonist Holden lives in this kind of age, and is a suffering young man. And because he has a human heart which flows backward against the age of materialism he struggles with the more accepted way of living in society.

III Opposition to Society

Holden opposes almost all of the material things in society. He seems to regard everything as phoney, and not to permit any meaning in its existence. We can see his attitude of rebellion from his intention to be a catcher.

When he leaves Pencey Prep, he wanders about the cold streets of New York wearing a red hunting hat. He sometimes turns back its brim like a baseball catcher. This red hunting hat symbolizes rebellion for him. When Ackley says "Up home we wear a hat like that to shoot deer in, for Chrissake. . . that's a deer shooting hat" (p. 26) Holden answers, "This is a people shooting hat. . . I shoot people in this hat." (p. 26) From this time on he keeps this hat with him almost all the time.

Holden also smokes cigars and drinks liquor, which likewise represent rebellion. Because he is 16 years old, he is not permitted to smoke or drink, but he does. Whenever he drops in at a bar after he leaves Pencey, he orders a drink. This kind of behavior must be noted in order to emphasize his opposition to the social standard. His criticism, of course, is based on his disagreement with society's indifference and lack of any sense of ethics. According to the commonly accepted standard, the boy who smokes and drinks lacks a sense of ethics and is a delinquent. But Holden starts negating this commonly accepted standard. (This gives liquor and tobacco an allegorical role in the story.)

When Holden leaves Pencey Prep, he goes to say goodbye to Mr. Spencer, who is one of the teachers in that school. Mr. Spencer is one of the phoneys pointed out by Holden in this novel. Spencer wholeheartedly supports the idea about "Life being a game and all. And how you should play it according to the rules," (p. 12) which

was said by Dr. Thurmer, the principal of Pencey Prep; and he repeats the same words, "Life is a game, boy. Life *is* a game that one plays according to the rules." (p. 13) Holden does not want to deny that life is a game, but he has some doubts about and hatred for the way of playing it, which ultimately means the shape society takes. That is to say, he thinks that because it is a game in which the weak will surely be defeated, and because this result itself has been decided in advance, it is therefore not a just game.

Game my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then its a game, all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the *other* side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game. (p. 13)

Holden has the same experience while he is attending Pencey Prep. When Stradlater has a date with Jane Gallagher; (I will mention more about her later. She is a girl whom Holden secretly loves deep in his heart) he borrows a car from Ed Banky, who was the coach of Pencey Prep's basketball club. According to the school rules, teachers can not lend cars to students. But Ed treats Stradlater as a "pet" because Stradlater takes a leading role on the team. Here again we can see the "Life is a game" pattern—the stronger defeat the weak.

This "Life is a game" pattern is also found in the relationship between children and parents in the novel. The parents in this story do not take care of their children, but are rather absorbed with what they themselves want to do. For example, some parents do not pay attention to their children because they are engrossed in movies. Some parents do not notice that their children are playing in the street where cars are passing at high speeds because they are distracted by their own conversations. Some parents rarely talk with

their children because they are only enthusiastic about money-making. Some parents leave their children alone because they want to attend a party. From these examples we can see that there is the same pattern of "Life is a game" in the relationships between parents and children. Children are weaker and parents are stronger. Because parents are stronger, their desire take precedence and children cannot do anything. This is the rule of the game which is based on preferential treatment of the stronger.

IV For the Weak—In Search of Love

We can understand that Holden's attitude is one of rebellion against the stronger in society. Therefore, his concern is for the weaker. What interests him is ducks in Central Park, children (Phoebe, Allie, James, Castle, and so on), and nuns, all of whom are, generally speaking, weak, and all of whom have some difficulties in living. For example, in the case of the ducks, when winter comes the water in the lake freezes and it becomes much harder for them to live in their own environment. As for children, they have to live in the adult world, the world of the stronger. Nuns are shabby and poor. Yet, though they have some difficulties and are poor, they don't have any fabrication, pretence, indifference, or impurity at all: they are innocent and, most important, they are very honest with themselves. Nevertheless, they are weak in actual life.

How these weaker people should live in the world of the stronger is a very important theme for Holden. When we read Dr. Thurmer and Mr. Spencer's words that "Life is a game," we can remember the following words in "Esmé—with Love and Squolor": Dear God, life is hell. . . Fathers and teachers, I ponder 'What is hell?' I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love."² X who had already

despaired of life recognized the necessity of love by means of these words and tried to trust the possibility of love.

Holden's theme, how to live, is equal to the idea of X in "Esme," how to accomplish love. To find a way to accomplish loving, he opposes the society. That is, at the same time as he criticizes the state that society is in, we notice that there is an eager love for human beings on the other side of his mind. In Holden, who seems to oppose almost all in vain, there is a strong desire for people to recover their loving hearts. This kind of desire is apparent in the part of the novel where he criticizes society or people; for he never forgets to also praise them. In the following way he explains that he does not hate people:

'But you're wrong about that hating business. I mean about hating football players and all. You really are. I don't hate too many guys. What I may do, I may hate them for a *little* while, like this guy Stradlater I knew at Pencey, and this other boy, Robert Ackley. I hated *them* once in a while—I admit it—but it doesn't last too long, is what I mean. After a while, if I didn't see them, if they didn't come in the room, or if I didn't see them in the dining room for a couple of meals, I sort of missed them. I mean I sort of missed them.' (p. 194)

In Holden's behavior there is an appeal to recover love, which we can see from the fact that he tries to make the people who were around him pay attention to him. One of his major means is by telling lies. For example, after he is given a blow by Stradlater, he goes to Ackley and tells a lie about becoming a monk. When he meets the mother of Ernest Morrow, one of his classmates, in the train, he tells her that he has a little tumor on the brain and has to have an operation. In the bar where he meets Luce, he pretends to be hit with a bullet in the belly. There are more examples about his lies, but the point is that by telling lies he hopes people around

him will pay attention to him. In a similar way, when he leaves Pencey Prep he says "Sleep tight, ya morons!" (p. 56) But he says this with a loud voice, and it would seem that to shout "sleep" means that in reality he intends to wake them up. Deep in his mind he must have a desire that they should wake up. This is also a means of getting attention.

Let's continue to check Holden's appeal to others. Holden is asked to write a composition by Stradlater. Stradlater asks him to write about a room or a house or something, but he writes about his dead brother Allie. Allie is one of the characters who belongs to the so-called nice world. He died of leukaemia at the age of thirteen when Holden was fifteen years old. I will mention about Allie in detail later on, but for now it is enough to say that Holden is constantly controlled by the memory of his dead brother. In other words, there lives a small child, Allie, in Holden's mind. And in the case of the essay written for Stradlater one might say that Holden wants that child's world to be understood by others.

Holden appeals in the same way to Sally Hayes, the queen of the phoneys. He is swindled money by Sunny, a whore, and Maurice, an elevator boy, and is given a blow and he calls Sally Hayes and meets her, tells her to go to Massachusetts or Vermont with him and moreover asks her to marry him at later date. Holden's attitude toward this little phoney, Sally Hayes, seems to derive from his intention to press his ideas on her: just before and after he tells her to live in Massachusetts or Vermont with him, he tries to make her understand his opinion that cars rule society, and that there are many fools in the university, and that there is something that should be done now about all of this.

Holden seems to be coldly opposing everything in society. But

actually by way of showing his rebellious attitude, which is different from the common point of view, he tries to call people's attention to and to make an appeal for the necessity for a warm world. We can remember Seymour Glass, a sacrifice of the war, who tried to talk to others by means of the extraordinary rather than the so-called ordinary men's point of view. In the elevator, he said to a woman, "If you want to look at my feet, say so. . . . But don't be a God-damned sneak about it."³ And after that he killed himself with a pistol in his room.

It seems to me that Holden and Seymour have the same kind of character. Both of them almost always hope that people will recognize their existence and listen to their opinions. The reason why they try to make an appeal to society is that they want to explain their own ideas about that society and they want the people to understand them. Deep in their minds, they want human nature to be revived in people's hearts. Another reason relates to the recognition of the appellant himself. When we try to censure that which is phoney in society, it is not easy to make ourselves understood just by means of pointing out that which is nice, which is what Holden tries to do. The phoney world is strong and the nice one is weak. Holden may have noticed from the beginning that this struggle would not be so easy, and perhaps because of this he does not try to escape from the society, which he criticizes, but rather to join it. In the first chapter of this novel, he speaks about ducks.

I was wondering if it [the lake in Central Park] would be frozen when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go. I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away. (p. 17)

Of course this wondering attitude comes from his interest in the

weak, as I have mentioned above. At the same time we have to pay attention to the fact that he remembers ducks at the time when he meets the strong society at Pencey Prep—when he meets Mr. Spencer and is given a good talking to. I think he feels puzzled, because he himself is the weak one, and like the ducks in Central Park when the water freezes, he does not know the proper place to go. Therefore, he himself overlaps with the ducks in his mind.

V Lonely Holden

Holden is a very lonely person. Furthermore, he is going to be squeezed to death. He does not have any friends with whom he can talk frankly in Pencey Prep. When he arrives in New York, what he does first is to enter a telephone booth. He suffers from loneliness to such an extent that he is willing to talk to anyone. However, though he enters a telephone booth, he can not find any person to call. At last he fails to call anyone and comes out of the telephone booth; he can not heal the sense of solitude. After the incident with the telephone booth, he gets in a taxi and talks to the driver about ducks. But the driver treats him like a fool. Then he calls Faith Cavendish, a woman whose name he has learned from a man he met at a Princeton University party. But she does not show any interest to him, and after that, he goes to a bar, and there meets Sally and Carl Luce. All along nobody notices his solitude, and moreover they do not even try to recognize him. From this viewpoint, we can see that what creates his sense of solitude is the profound lack of recognition between him and others.

Holden makes every effort to reveal the faults and the injustices of society to the actual world because of his deep affection to it. But in the end his efforts ironically cause him to recognize only

the broad gap between himself and the actual world. This kind of recognition pushes him into deep solitude and gives him a strong sense of helplessness. In turn, this sense of helplessness causes him to recognize that he himself must be helped.

Holden is in a precarious situation, because though he is a child of sixteen, one of his legs is in the adult world while the other is in the child world. It can be said that he stands in the adult world as well as in the child one. He himself recognizes that he had both childlike qualities and adult-like ones, and is in the dangling position.

‘Boy!’ I said. I also say ‘boy!’ quite a lot. Partly because I have a lousy vocabulary and partly because I act quite young for my age sometimes. I was sixteen then, and I’m seventeen now, and sometimes I act like I’m about thirteen. It’s really ironical because I’m six-foot-two-and-a-half and I have grey hair. I really do. The one side of my head—the right side—is full of millions of grey hairs. I’ve had them ever since I was a kid. And yet I still act sometimes like I was only about twelve. (p. 13)

Holden does childish things for his age, but he also has an adult-like side to his character. For one thing, he usually does precisely what he has criticized in others, which means that he is growing up and becoming an adult. He has an aversion to saying “Good luck!” or “. . . glad to have met you,” but at the same time he has resigned himself to using such words in order to live. When he asks a small girl to go to have a hot chocolate after he helps her tighten her skate, she says, “No, thank you.” When he tries to help some very tiny kids who are on a see-saw, they do not want him around. We can understand from these examples that he is departing from the child world and going into the adult world. Holden wants to protect the children who are playing in the rye field from falling from the cliff, on whose edge they are standing. Allegorically, the bottom of

the cliff must mean the phoney adult world, and he too is standing on the edge with his back towards the dangerous cliff and with his face towards the nice child world, but one of his legs is about to fall from the cliff. Children playing near the cliff are certainly in physical danger, but he is standing in a dangerous position, too. From this point of view, he also needs to be helped.

VI Expectation about Women

Holden is very interested in women. Among the women he feels interested in are Jane, Sally, Sunny, Selma Thurmer, three women from Seattle, two nuns, women seen from the hotel, two women in the band, a singer of Valencia, a woman working in the baggage deposit center, and many more. In addition, he feels interested in Stradlater's girl friends and is absorbed in talk about the sex with Ackley and Luce. His strong interest in women, at first appearance, seems normal for a sixteen-year-old boy. But it seems to me that at least a part of his interest comes from his sense of solitude. That is to say, as he suffers from a strong sense of solitude, he needs someone's help, and this unconsciously makes him feel interested in women. Holden always has an inferiority complex because he was weak and not manlike. He envies Stradlater's sturdy build; the virility of Blop: the sweetheart of his brother's friend; the strength of Maurice: a confidence man; the physical beauty of Al Pike: Jane's former sweetheart; and so on. He imagines that he has become strong, so he does not wipe the blood from his nose after he is punched by Stradlater. As he wants to be a virile man, he imagines a strong build for himself. But actually his fancy does not come true, which makes him feel helpless.

Indeed, he has such a strong inferiority complex that he can not

have sexual intercourse even with a whore, Sunny. We can see that Holden shares some of the qualities of people in the society, where heavy emphasis is placed on sex, but that he fails to be "in." (I think it is not necessary to think in terms of "out" or "in," but there are general ideas about what a sixteen-year-old boy's build should be, and what his knowledge about sex and his sexual experience should be. But as Holden is below such general standards, he feels himself very inferior.) He has a strong sense of inferiority because of his virginity and he makes every effort to get away from it, perhaps because he thinks that by being a non-virgin he might be able to escape from his solitude; and he might be able to succeed in having a symbolic contact with others by means of sexual intercourse. From this viewpoint women have some power to help him. But they do not understand Holden's sense of solitude and so ignore him. Therefore, his desire to be helped leads him into a deeper more solitary world.

VII Retreat to His Own World

From the realistic viewpoit, when he understands that it is impossible to succeed in his appeal and his desire to be helped, what Holden does is to retreat from actual life. He has been looking for a possibility of living in the real world, but at the same time, he has felt misgivings about it. When Phoebe, his sister, asks him who he likes best, he thought two nuns, James Castle, and his dead brother Allie. But the only person whom he really named was Allie. And he tells her that he likes to talk to her.

Allie was two years younger than Holden and he died of a leukae-mia in Maine on July 18, 1946. Allie was clever, a red-haired boy who never got angry with others. He was left-handed and once wrote

a poem in his baseball mitt, a mitt which Holden always had with him. When Allie died, Holden broke all the the window panes with fist; and for that reason, he feels pain and cannot clench his fist even now. Whenever Holden is unsuccessful in talking to others, he starts talking to Allie in his mind. For example, after he can not have sexual intercourse with Sunny in the Edmond Hotel, he starts talking to Allie with a loud voice. As Holden himself confesses in this novel, he used to talk to Allie when he feels depressed. One time when he makes a date with Carl Luce and meets him in a bar, he finds himself left alone because Luce leaves the bar after only a couple of minutes. Though he wants to talk to Carl Luce, his desire is not accomplished and he goes walking in Central Park alone. At that time he remembers Allie. On the following day after he escapes from Mr. Antolini's house, and is walking in the street, he feels as if he were falling and he could never get to other side of the street, and then he talks to Allie. We can see that when Holden is particularly lonely and does not know what to do, he asks Allie to help him. But just as Phoebe suggests to him that "Allie's dead," (p. 178) Allie is not a real person.

James Castle has the same meaning for Holden as Allie. James Castle was one of Holden's classmates at Elkton Hills School, but got into trouble because he "wouldn't take back something he said about this very conceited boy, Phil Stabile. James Castle called him a very conceited guy, and one of Stabile's lousy friends went and squealed on him to Stabile. So Stabile, with about six other dirty bastards, went down to James Castle's room and went in and locked the goddam door and tried to make him take back what he said, but he wouldn't do it. . . . Finally, what he did, instead of taking back what he said, he jumped out the window." (pp. 176-177)

It seems that Holden did not know James Castle well. He likes James Castle's strong will and his ability to do what he says. But as James, too, is dead, he is not a real person, either.

The two nuns play the same role as Allie and James Castle. They look shabby. They sincerely devote their lives to benevolent work and for that reason, they do not care about their appearance at all. He refers to Sally's mother and his aunt and his mother in order to prove that nuns do what they say. He "kept trying to picture his mother or somebody, or his aunt, or Sally Hayes' crazy mother, standing outside some department store and collecting dough for poor people in a beat-up old straw basket. It was hard to picture. . . I couldn't picture her [his aunt] doing anything for charity if she had to wear black clothes and no lip-stick while she was doing it. And old Sally Hayes' mother. Jesus Christ." (p. 120) Holden likes the two nuns. But as they are only passers-by, they cannot have any realistic meaning for him. This is proved by the fact that he can not find them in the street on Christmas eve even when he eagerly tries to do so.

Holden does not name Jane as one of the people he likes, but she rules his consciousness with more meaning than just a girl. The scene in which we first notice that he is conscious of Jane is when he talks with Stradlater at Pencey Prep. Then after he leaves Pencey Prep, he tries to call her almost all the time. He thinks about calling her seven times, but at last he only dials once (and at that time he can not get her on the telephone); the other six times he does not even turn the dial under the pretext that he does not feel like it. We can say that, like Allie, Castle and the two nuns, Jane does not have any actual meaning, because the Jane in Holden's mind is the former, younger woman. While Holden was living in

Maine, he got acquainted with her. He showed her Allie's baseball mitt. One time when he was playing checkers with her, her stepfather came and asked her if there was cigar in the house. She did not answer him, so he entered the house. At that time Holden saw tears dropping from her eyes. The sight of shedding tears, meaning that she was treated badly by an adult, impressed him and remains even now in his mind. He is seeking this figure only, not one of Jane of the present time.

Holden likes Phoebe for the same reason as he likes Jane: he is favorably disposed to Phoebe's purity as a child.⁴⁾ But she is more precocious than ordinary children. We can see the strong relationship between the two of them when he says, "I mean if you tell old Phoebe something, she knows exactly what the hell you're talking about." (p. 72) Her character is reflected in her broad forehead and in the fact that she likes broad places. On the other hand, when he says that she is "just like the fencing team at Pencey," (p. 173) we can see that she has an ill-natured character. But Holden envisions only her childlike qualities and is completely blind to her other aspects.

Allie and Castle are not alive in the actual world. The two nuns and Jane and the child's world which includes Phoebe and towards which Holden entertains wholehearted good will, do not have any reality, either. These people are just members of a group isolated from the actual society. From this point of view, it can be said that Holden has retreated to an isolated world which does not have any actual meaning, and indeed is dead. That is, his world (*i.e.*, he himself) is the dead one; it is nothing but a fantasy world within the real society. He has escaped from the real society into his own fantasy world, because this fantasy world is private and it is the

most satisfactory and stable place for him. He explains this escape into his own world by means of saying that he wants to be a catcher to protect children and that he will go to the West to live, pretending to be blind and deaf.

VIII Desire to be a Catcher in the Rye

When we read about Holden retreating into his own world, we are reminded of the bananafish in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." Seymour explains about bananafish to a child of Sybil whom he meets on the beach.

Their habits are very peculiar. . . . They lead a very tragic life . . . they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're ordinary looking fish when they swim *in*. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas. . . Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door.⁵⁾

A bananafish means a fish that enters a banana hole—the world of ego—and eats a banana—which means ego. Holden enters the same world of ego and satisfies himself like a bananafish.

The reason why Holden tries to enter the world of ego must be that he thinks he cannot trust the actual world. He would hope that at least the ducks in Central Park (which are not protected by anyone); and Allie (whose grave is abandoned by callers for condolence one time when it rains, simply because they do not want to get soaked); and Jane (who might be profaned by Stradlater); and Phoebe (who goes to an elementary school and visits a museum where there are a lot of dirty scribblings on the wall); and Castle (whose death nobody could prevent); and the children coming back from church (whose parents do not pay attention to their danger); would not be sullied and would be exposed to danger. It seems to me that his own

danger makes him enter this world of ego. We can recognize in his desire to be a catcher for children, his reason for entering his fantasy world. The intention to be a catcher in the rye takes root in his mind when he hears children coming back from church singing a song.

It wasn't as cold as it was the day before, but the sun still wasn't out, and it wasn't too nice for walking. But there was one nice thing. This family that you could tell just came out of some church were walking right in front of me—a father, a mother, and a little kid about six years old. . . . I got up closer so I could hear he was singing. He was singing that song, 'If a body catch a body coming through the rye.' He had a pretty little voice, too. He was just singing for the hell of it, you could tell. The cars zoomed by, brakes screeched all over the place, his parents paid no attention to him, and he kept on walking next to the kerb and singig 'If a body catch a body coming through the rye.' (pp. 121–122)

At last when there is no place left for him to go, he goes to meet Phoebe. She says to him, "Name something you'd like to be," (p. 178) and at that point he answers that he'd like to be a catcher in the rye.

' . . . , I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in the big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean— except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy.' (pp. 179-180)

But as he himself says that "I know it's crazy," to be a catcher in the rye does not have any good meaning for him, except that he just enters his own egistic world. His start is the recognition of human nature in society: it is absent in the standard way of living in the actual world. In contrast, the world with which he is

absorbed is a fantasy world that lacks reality, so it can be said that *his* world is lacking in effectiveness. The world he is that engrossed in, which is pure and is full of love, can be defined simply by the phrase "child's world." He wants to remain in this kind of child's world, but he cannot stay any longer. This fact proves that the world that he wants to have come true does not have any actuality. As I explained in the discussion of his instability above, children do not accept him and even with Phoebe he can have contact only by way of buying her favorite record. (Which he then drops and breaks.) From these examples, we can see that his desire only revolves in vain within his mind. He says that he wants to be a savior of children, but as he is lonely and can not have good contact with others, in reality he asks *them* to save *him* by means of his trying to talk to them. The contradiction of a man looking for people to save him by himself trying to save children is found in his desire.

IX Fantasy and Reality

This contradiction between fantasy and reality causes Holden some complications. When he arrives in New York he starts to ask taxi drivers about the fate of the ducks in Central Park. The first driver treats him like a fool, but Horwitz, the second driver, answers him by saying that fish have more difficulty living in the lake than ducks do.

'The *fish* don't go no place. They stay right where they are, the fish. Right in the goddam lake. . . . It's tougher for the fish, the winter and all, than it is for the ducks, for Chrissake. . . . They live right *in* the goddam ice. It's their nature, for Chrissake. They get frozen right in one position for the whole winter. . . . Their bodies take in nutrition and all, right through the goddam seaweed and crap that's in the ice. They got their *pores* open the whole time. That's their *nature*, for chrissake. . . .' (pp. 87—88)

Horwitz explains to Holden that if they could fly away, they would not have worry, but that the fish cannot fly away from the lake. Therefore, the fish have to live there for the whole winter, taking up something from the environment of the water. Holden answers all right to Horwitz's explanation.

While he was a student at the Whooton School, his student adviser was Carl Luce. Later he meets Luce at the Wicker Bar and Luce suggests in a rude way that Holden should try to live instead of retreating into his own world: "Same old Caulfield. When are you going to grow up?" (p. 150)

Phoebe makes almost the same suggestion to him. He comes back home ahead of the school schedule, and she notices that he was expelled. "Daddy's going to kill you," says she and hides her head with a pillow. Phoebe is a girl who can sympathize with other's hearts to the point where she would even kindly accept a broken record. But she can not permit him to have been expelled from school and just come back. Therefore, however hard he tries to explain to her that he will go to work on a stock farm in Colorado, still she recognizes his plan as a non-realistic dream and does not accept it. She tells him "you don't like anything that's happening." (p. 176) When Holden names Allie as his favorite person, she gets angry with him and says, "Allie's *dead*. you always say that!" (p. 178) She reproves him for his tendency to dislike others, and to escape into his own world, *i. e.*, the fantasy world. (Mr. Antolini also gives him the same advice. Please refer to notes eight to twelve.)

In *Franny and Zooey*, Zooey's mother gives him the same advice as Horwitz, Luce, Phoebe, and Mr. Antolini give Holden.

"You either take to somebody or you don't. If you do, then you do all the talking and nobody can even get a word in edgewise, If you *don't* like

somebody — which is most of the time — then you just sit around like death itself and let the person talk themselves into a hole. I've seen you do it Neither you nor Buddy know how to talk to people you don't like. . . . You can't live in the world with such strong likes and dislikes.⁶⁾

Holden is caught in the spider's threads of his own egistic and self-satisfactory world the same as the brothers and sisters of the Glass family.

One of the reasons Holden escapes to his own fantasy world is that he can not succeed in talking to the actual world. The other reason is that he wants to remain in the child's world and at least try to save other children. In other words, it seems that he hesitates or fears to recognize that things change at all; that is to say, he has a conservative quality to his personality.⁷⁾ For example, he tries to call Jane many times but he says to himself that he does not feel like it (which is a lie), and in the end he dials only once: He does not want to know that Jane has changed in comparison with her small childhood self. His interest in the museum and the elementary school and the park is supported by his strong expectation that even if the human mind changes, nothing changes in these places; everything remains as it used to be.

However, we can imagine that Jane's childhood purity was destroyed by Stradlater. Also, there were indecent scribblings in the elementary school and in the museum, and in the park, "there didn't look like there was anything. . . except dog crap and globs of spit and cigar butts from old men, and the benches all looked like they'd be wet if you sat down on them." (p. 124) Holden hesitates to admit this kind of real world, but Horwitz, Luce, Phoebe, and Mr. Antolini try to suggest it to him. Above all, the suggestions of Mr. Antolini and Phoebe are effective in making him get out of his fantasy world.

X Mr. Antolini and Phoebe

Mr. Antolini was "about the best teacher [I] he ever had." (p.181) When Holden calls him late at night, he is kind enough to say to come to his house any time. When Holden's brother, D.B., says that he will go to Hollywood, as with Holden he advises him not to go there. Mr. Antolini is one of a few adults (along with the two nuns), with whom he does not hesitate to be honest. But actually it seems that he is a "pervert," because he says loudly with his wife in the house like others. In other words he and his wife do not understand each other. We can see this when we read that they have not been in the same room. Therefore, though they kissed in the presence of others as if they loved each other, they really do not.

However, Mr. Antolini asks the same questions about Pencey Prep as Mr. Spencer did. And at one point when he asks some questions about Pencey Prep, Holden remarks that "I didn't feel much like going into it. I was still feeling sort of dizzy or something, and I had a helluva headache all of a sudden. I really did." (p. 190) It would seem that he is gradually beginning to feel the same for Mr. Antolini as he did for Mr. Spencer. What makes Holden that Mr. Antolini is just a pervert is Mr. Antolini's strange behavior towards him at night: it seems like homosexual behavior. But one questions whether it is important whether he was a homosexual or not. What is important is that Holden doubts Mr. Antolini. Holden thinks that "... what did worry me was the part about how I'd woke up and found him patting me on the head and all. I mean I wondered if just maybe I was wrong about thinking he was making a flitty pass at me. I wondered if maybe he just liked to pat guys on the head when they're asleep." (p. 201) Antolini advises him "not to hate others,"⁸⁾ "not to get caught in his own egoistic world,"⁹⁾ "too

grow up,”¹⁰ “to screw up his courage to go through solitude as others did,”¹¹ and “to have the possibility of expressing himself by way of education.”¹² When Holden questions whether or not Mr. Antolini is a homosexual, the latter’s advice becomes important. Mr. Antolini understands Holden and Holden thinks that Mr. Antolini understands him. It turns out that if Mr. Antolini is a homosexual, and a so-called phoney and yet can understand Holden, then there is a flaw in his so-called “nice fantasy world.” And if Mr. Antolini is not a phoney or a homosexual, Holden’s fantasy world is shaken because he doubted a *nice* person.

Though Holden is shocked by Mr. Antolini, he clings to his fantasy world. When he goes to say good-bye to Phoebe at school, he finds the obscene scribbling, “fuck you.” (Indeed, he sees this scribbling twice: he erases it the first time but he can not do so the second time because it is engraved in the wall.) When he goes to the museum, he sees the same scribbling again. It is Phoebe who makes Holden give up his fantasy world conclusively. She lends him all of her money which she has saved for Christmas presents. We can see that she takes the role of saving Holden instead of him saving her and that her kind behavior towards him makes him recognize that he will not be able to be a savior after all. Above all, when she insists that she will go to the West with him, all he can do is to say “No. Shut up,” (p. 212) in the same way an adult speaks to a child. As she insists on going to the West with him, his fantasy ceases to be a fantasy and going to the West cannot but become an actual act. And shortly after, there is an incident where Phoebe is in some danger on a carousel, trying to grab for a gold ring, and Holden fails to try and help her.

All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe,

and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them. (p. 218)

In this example we can see that he has recognized that he will not be able to be a catcher for children. The world he longs for is nothing but a fantasy, and in life children have to grow up by themselves. That is to say, Holden finally realizes the nature of his present situation.

XI Afterword—Intention to Live

Though Holden is in the same kind of strong egoistic world as Seymour, Holden is saved from death. There must be many reasons for this, but one of the most important ones is that Holden is able to continue to live because of the lesson of his brother Allie—in the same way as the Glass family continues to live because of that of Seymour's death. It seems that Holden learned this lesson by way of being soaked with the same rain that rained on Allie's grave while he is watching Phoebe on the carousel.

Nevertheless, we cannot say that Holden is completely safe. It may be true that he temporarily stops rebelling against society and struggling with his ego, as is written in the last chapter.

A lot of people, especially this one psychoanalyst guy they have here, keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back to school next September. It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you *do* it? The answer is, you don't. I think I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question. (p. 220)

It is easy to understand that he still loves people when we read the passage, "I sort of *miss* everybody I told about"(p.220); he does not think what he has done was wrong. Indeed, he is thinking that

he would relive the same adventure any time in the future if possible. As he mentions in the above quotation, "I swear it's a stupid question," we can see that he (and we, too) will not be able to escape from the dual world of society and ego; he will never be safe. There is a passage along these lines in "Esmé—with Love and Squalor": "Isn't it a pity that we didn't meet under less extenuating circumstances? " ¹³⁾ The modern society is the so-called extenuating one. Holden is a sacrifice of this kind of society. Even if he has an intention to live, that is to say, even if he can succeed in a temporary reconciliation with his ego, it does not mean that his role as a sacrifice is taken away. He has to continue to live in the *same* society. For that reason, his existence itself is a living witness with great ironical significance.

(March 31, 1980)

Notes

1. J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (England: Penguin Modern Classics, 1951) This is the textbook of this report. All pages numbers in this report refer to this book.
2. J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories* (New York: Bantan Books, 1953), p. 105.
3. J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*, p. 17.
4. The name "Phoebe" means "virginity." In Greek mythology she is one of Titanesses, a daughter of Uranus and Gaea, and a mother of Leto and Artemis. In Roman mythology she is identified with Diana. Diana is the goddess of the moon and is considered to be a patron saint for virginity and hunting.
5. J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*, pp. 15—16.
6. J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey* (England: Penguin Books, 1955)

and 1957), p. 80.

7. Warren French, *J.D. Salinger*, revised edition (Boston: A Division of G.K. Hall & Co., Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 120.

8. This fall I think you're riding for—it's a special kind of fall, a terrible kind. The men falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit the bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they ever really even got started. (p. 194)

. . . But I can very clearly see you dying nobly, one way or another, for some highly unworthy cause. (p. 195)

9. "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." (p. 195)

10. 'I think that one of these days. . . you're going to have to find out where you want to go. And then you've got to start going there. But immediately. You can't afford to lose a minute. Not you.' (p. 195)

11. Among other things, you'll find that you're not the first person who was even confused and frightened and even sickened by human behaviour. You're by no means alone on that score, ~~you'll be excited and stimulated to know.~~ Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. (p. 196)

12. 'Something else an academic education will do for you. If you go along with it any considerable distance, it'll begin to give you an idea what size mind you have. What it'll fit and, maybe, what it won't. After a while, you'll have an idea what kind of thoughts

you particular size mind should be wearing. For one thing, it may save you an extraordinary amount of time trying on ideas that didn't suit you, aren't becoming to you. You'll begin to know your true measurements and dress your mind accordingly.' (p. 197)

13. J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*, p. 103.